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ABSTRACT

This booklet provides subject area high school teachers with a guide for teaching students with learning disabilities who are being mainstreamed into regular classrooms. The booklet points out that teachers of students with learning disabilities must find and implement different approaches to teaching course content to meet each student's needs, and that teaching methods should cater to the student's strengths. Specific suggestions are offered in the areas of program planning, teaching study skills, developing and using listening skills, note taking, and vocabulary and paragraph building. Characteristics of students with learning disabilities in the areas of behavior, visual difficulties, and auditory difficulties are listed, and suggested remediation methods are offered. (JDD)

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LEARNING DISABILITIES
IN THE HIGH SCHOOL:

A METHODS BOOKLET
FOR SECONDARY
SPECIAL SUBJECT TEACHERS

Edited by
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ACLD Secondary
Committee

THE PARABLE

A high school teacher was once asked why her students seemed to experience so much success in her courses. She explained it this way:

I think of my students as "rays of sunshine", all of various lengths, some long, some short, none just alike. Some shone brightly, while others stay behind the clouds; and others prefer rainfall, so they need not perform at all.

However, with enough understanding, they overcome all of these feelings, and proudly beam and shine!

That's why we have some days without a cloud in the sky.

INTRODUCTION

It is the intent of this booklet to provide secondary teachers with a guide for teaching learning disabled students that are being mainstreamed into traditional or regular classrooms.

When a student enters a secondary level classes a great deal more is expected of him. Teachers assume that these students are prepared to perform in various ways such as following directions, preparing written assignments, and possessing adequate listening skills, and capability of independent and group work skills. Students are also expected to have an adequate vocabulary, understand lectures, to be able to take and use notes, and take tests on the material covered. The necessity of being proficient in areas such as these can cause serious problems for the high school learning disabled student. Often it is the inability to meet these expectations that causes the student to fail or withdraw from the course.

It is generally assumed among secondary teachers that their responsibility to the student is to teach course content, and not to ameliorate or accommodate learning problems. However, if secondary learning disability students are to achieve success in these classes, then the teacher must find and implement different approaches to teaching course content.

The mainstreaming of mildly handicapped students in the regular high school classroom has required the secondary teacher to examine and change course content and methods to best meet the unique needs of each individual. Basic teaching methodologies are the same for all students, but the teacher needs to implement variations in application in order to reach each individual child. Teaching methods should be adjusted to coincide with the students' best learning characteristics or, in other words, should cater to the students' strengths. Hopefully, the topics selected and the ideas expressed in this booklet will inspire secondary teachers to search cooperatively for a method that will enable each individual student to experience success in the classroom.

PROGRAM PLANNING

Close communication between the LD teacher and the regular classroom teacher is a necessity, if the student is to be taught using the most effective methods. In fact, there should be a constant sharing of information and ideas before the student begins the course work. Together they should decide the approach to the subject material that will be used. The special subject teacher should be included (if not, should ask to be) in the conference when the Individual Educational Plan is developed and written, so that they can better understand the specific disabilities of the child. This would also enable them to request specific aids such as materials, persons, or additional consultation, etc., that would make the student more "mainstreamable". The secondary teacher should be

aware that such supports or aids should be written into the IEP or there is no administrative assurance that they shall be available. After sufficient information is gathered concerning the students, strengths and weaknesses academically, then the special subject teacher is prepared to work with the student in setting priorities, and goals that will enable him to progress successfully in the course. After this is done, then the LD teacher must check with each other periodically to ensure the ongoing or success of the original plan, or agree to modifications with the student and parent if it is necessary to revise the IEP.

TEACHING STUDY SKILLS

Many educators define basic skills only as communication and computation skills. However, study skills are also basic and such skills for learning are at the heart of the educational process. After all, study skills are the learned abilities that one has for the purpose of acquiring knowledge and competence.

Every teacher should take into consideration that many students lack the study skills required for efficient learning. During the critical transition years of secondary school, as homework increased and content areas expand, many students find it increasingly difficult to succeed in school.

It is well worth a teacher's time to emphasize study skills, for they are processes for learning. When a student

learns a study skill, he is learning a way of problem solving, a method which can be employed in any relevant context. In other words, the use of study skills can be transferred into any subject once a method is learned or mastered.

It is easy for secondary teachers to think of "teaching study skills" as a job for elementary teachers, and for them to direct their attention more toward "content" and fewer skills. However, as secondary teachers continue to have educationally handicapped students mainstreamed into their classes, they must emphasize basic study skills if these youth are to compete.

It should also be pointed out that throughout the years of childhood and adolescence there is continual cognitive development and that students are only able to deal successfully with learning

tasks which are appropriate for their levels of development. It is important that instructors realize this and apply it to their expectations and teaching methods in the classroom.

LISTENING SKILLS

A. DEVELOPING LISTENING SKILLS

It is estimated that more than one-half of the school day in secondary schools is spent listening. Listening is more than just hearing - the student must also understand what he is hearing.

After a student leaves elementary school, he is expected to be able to listen effectively. This skill is critical to success in all academic areas, as well as in everyday living. However, many students of high school age, have not yet become active listeners. That is, keeping thoughts directed on what is being said (taught). Teachers need to emphasize to their students that it takes effort and practice to be a good listener.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals recommends three ways for teachers to help their students to become more effective listeners:

1. Teach students to listen for information and organization by regularly summarizing what the speaker has said. Keep reminding yourself of what has been covered.

2. Teach students to be critical listeners. If possible think ahead of the speaker while you are listening.

3. Teach students to listen for appreciation. Try to listen "between the lines" or figure out what the speaker is hinting at or saying indirectly.

B. USING LISTENING SKILLS

For some students who have reading difficulties listening may be their strongest asset. They may be able to complete assignments faster using their listening skills rather than reading the textbook material. However, preparing tapes of the course (using parts of the textbook) would initially require more teacher preparation time (or recruitment of volunteers).

Using tapes of textbooks and other course material for some students has definite advantages. Many students would prefer this method to using alternate, lower level textbooks, which do not stimulate language and vocabulary growth. Also, the student is more prepared academically for additional courses, than if he had been allowed to use a lower reading level text.

Using tape recorded versions of the text should be a definite consideration for secondary school teachers. Not only are the students using and benefiting from their listening skills, but they are also improving their thinking performance.

However, listening strategies for use of tapes must also be taught to the student.

SUCCESS IN TAKING AND USING NOTES

Many teachers feel that effective note-taking is the most useful study skill that a student can learn. It is true that the ability to take good notes will prove helpful not just academically but also in other areas that require the retention of information. In order for a student to take notes effectively, he must have the ability to identify main ideas and important data within a written or oral presentation and relate those.

Many students do not realize what they are attempting to accomplish by taking notes. Some think they should copy down everything, while others write down a few facts here and there that don't explain anything.

If an instructor uses the note-taking method in the teaching of the course then special attention should be given to teaching the students on <u>how</u> to take notes.

It would be beneficial to all of the students if the teacher would conduct a class period or unit on the essentials of good note-taking. Methods for teaching note-taking would include:

(a) helping the student figure out what the important ideas and facts are in what you'll be reading or saying. Emphasize that writing the important ideas and facts down will help to learn them.

(b) Explain to the students that they benefit from taking notes a week or month later as they prepare for tests. Notes provide them with a record of what they need to know for the future.

(c) Present the unit on note-taking with the use of the overhead projector to provide a model for note-taking, or providing a clear, dittoed outline to assist students.

TIPS FOR NOTE TAKING

1. Write down main ideas of what you've heard or read.

2. Write your notes in your own words.

3. Remember, notes do not need to be detailed!

4. Try to spend 80-90% of your time reading or listening and only 10-20% of your time writing notes.

5. Do not try to take notes only at the ends of chapters or at class breaks. Rather, do so after meaningful sections.

6. Write in words and phrases - your notes are <u>you</u>, so write them in the quickest way that makes sense for you.

VOCABULARY AND PARAGRAPH BUILDING

Often when a student enters high school emphasis is no longer placed on areas such as vocabulary building and organizing paragraphs. However, if students are to answer tests and essay questions in complete sentences, they must be proficient in these areas.

Teachers can assist students in expanding their vocabularies by having a vocabulary list for each chapter that is covered in the text. If it is presented before the chapter or material is covered, it would also assist the students as they read the material for the first time. Students should also be taught the use and value of the dictionary as well as how to use context clues - those familiar words or phrases in a sentence or paragraph that aid him in figuring out an unknown word.

It should also be explained at the beginning of the course what the teacher expects in the answering of essay questions. If necessary, the instructor should go over the organizing of the paragraph and the elements of a good paragraph which would enable a student to write a sufficient response to an essay question.

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS, IDEAS, AND METHODS

There are still many other, important ways that secondary teachers can assist their pupils in achieving success in high school courses. There are endless ideas and ways to work with students regardless of their many different abilities. Listed below are additional methods:

(1) Many students need direct instruction in how to use the textbook for a particular course.

(2) Also, teachers can make suggestions for creating a good study environment that will assist students in learning away from school. Suggestions on "how to study", "how to improve memory", "how to use time wisely", would be beneficial to the student as well.

(3) Preparing students for the <u>type</u> of test the teacher gives can be helpful whether it be matching, true-false, short answer, etc. This way students know what to expect when taking a test.

CHARACTERISTICS OF LEARNING DISABILITIES AND SUGGESTED REMEDIATION METHODS

Dr. Michael S. Kahn, among others, has developed a list of characteristics that describe auditory, visual, and general symptoms of the learning disabled adolescent. He also suggests methods for circumventing those learning problems. The characteristics listed below would serve as an excellent guide for any secondary teacher of learning disabled students.

(A) Behavioral characteristics

1. Learning difficulty not primarily attributable to impaired vision, hearing , intelligence, emotional or environmental well-being, plus underachievement in certain, but not all, academic subjects.

2. Weak study habits

   a. inability to organize and budget time

   b. slow to start tasks

   c. difficulty completing tasks

   d. poor notetaking and outlining skills

   e. struggles using reference materials

3. Discrepancy in quality or oral and written work

4. Poor attention span

   a. overactivity - constantly on the move

   b. underactivity

   c. distractibility

5. Language problems

   a. substituting easier words for complex words

   b. trouble verbalizing answers and speaking in whole sentences

   c. refraining from discussions or questions

   d. forgetting, confusing, or mis-articulating words

   e. difficulty describing objects and defining simple vocabulary

6. Poor short and long-term memory for information presented in class

7. Floundering when trying to follow oral or written directions

8. Disorganized thoughts

9. Lack of gestures when talking

10. Confusing left and right sides

11. Motor coordination problems

a. unorganized

b. sloppy

c. clumsy walking, running, holding pens and pencils

d. failure to swing arms when walking or running

(B) Suggestions to compensate

1. Set learning priorities and teach accordingly (these students cannot master everything).

2. For all class sessions, review previous materials, preview material to be presented, and help students summarize the material just presented.

3. Eliminate such classroom distractions as excess noise, physical motion, flickering lights, shiny jewelry, and loud clock ticking.

4. Whenever possible make alternative assignments -- for incomplete or incorrect work, give an alternative assignment, not a redo of the original assignment.

5. Notice and respond to nonverbal and verbal signs of anxiety or frustration.

6. Have student helpers assist students with lectures and assignments. The helpers could take lecture notes or correct the students' lecture notes.

7. Make sure that the student understands what you have said, done, or

demonstrated; then move on to more complex material

8. Provide and teach memory tricks (mnemonics)

9. Teach the student to proofread assignments and tests - the teacher or helper could read the student's work back to him until the student is capable of proofreading his own work

10. Teach and encourage the student to use all learning modalities (visual, auditory, and motor - notetaking from lectures). To help students take lecture notes:

a. provide introductory activities for the lecture by reviewing previous day's lecture

b. supply students with sufficient time to review notes

c. discuss new and previously introduced vocabulary words and concepts

d. teach a shorthand and abbreviation system using such notations as

1)	w/	=	with
2)	ie	=	that is
3)	∴	=	therefore
4)	& or +	=	and
5)	e.g.,	=	for example
6)	=	=	equal
7)	≠	=	not equal
8)	imp	=	important

e. during the lecture the teacher should

1) talk distinctly and at a rate that students can follow

2) give an organized lecture

3) stop periodically and encourage questions

4) give unmistakable clues to identify and emphasize important information (for example, "This is important," "The main points are," "This could be a test question.")

5) repeat major information

6. refer students to important textbook pages; use such visual devices as blackboards, overhead projectors and dittos to stress information

f. after the lecture the teacher should

1) help the students summarize the lecture

2) recognize students' notetaking skills and when needed provide additional instruction

3) give students time to edit notes and ask questions

11. Encourage the students to reflect on a task before starting it.

12. Capture student attention before beginning class.

13. Emphasize meaningful associations, be organized, and relate to student experiences.

14. Give individual conferences to guide students and monitor understanding of assignments and course content.

15. Frequently review material and check comprehension

16. Take the time to give good directions

a. have students' attention before starting

b. tell students purpose of activity

c. give direct and uncomplicated directions

1) use correct grammar and vocabulary students understand

2) be seen and heard clearly

3) be concise and give sequential steps for students to follow

4) be relaxed and positive

5) minimize distractions

6) make sure written directions are legible

d. tell class what materials to use and where to find them

e. vary ways to give directions

1) oral, direct from the teacher or recorded on tape (so student can replay directions)

2) written on ditto paper, blackboard, or overhead projector

3) demonstrate what is to be done

f. clarify directions before starting the activity

1) work on example together

2) display a completed project

3) encourage questions

4) have students start the activity, then walk around the room checking on student progress

g. encourage students to write down, copy, or tape record directions

h. with long-term assignments, ask for periodic status reports

17. Encourage students to keep only materials necessary for class on their desks.

18. Set time limits for classroom activities

    a. During examinations keep a clock visible and post time remaining

19. Help the students be organized by:

    a. posting a weekly schedule of class and study times

    b. listing materials needed for class

    c. posting dates assignments are due

20. Teach students to use textbook sections: glossary, index, table of contents, introductions, summaries, and graphics.

21. Instead of solely large group activity, provide for small group and/or independent projects.

22. Keep extra supplies of paper, pens, and books.

23. Have the students work in a study carrel.

24. Give several short classroom activities instead of one long activity.

25. Make furniture arrangements easy to maneuver around.

VISUAL DIFFICULTIES

A. Behavioral characteristics to note

1. Problems with visual tasks

   a. loses place easily

   b. becomes bored, restless, frustrated

   c. seems uncertain in recalling visually presented information

   d. shows signs of eye problems (rubbing, headaches)

2. Mechanical problems taking examinations

   a. places answers in the wrong spots

   b. cannot draw lines on a matching test

   c. poorer performance when using a separate answer sheet

3. Preference for auditory activities

   a. when shown a sound film, pays more attention to source of the sound than to the movie screen

   b. listens to lecture without making eye contact

4. Prefers to avoid pictures and graphics

   a. difficulty interpreting

b. slow rate of preception

c. poor recall of information

d. inattentiveness

5. Problems with oral and silent reading

a. word-by-word or syllable-by-syllable reading

b. excessive lip movement or vocalizing in silent reading

c. body motion while reading

d. numerous oral reading errors; mispronunciation (both gross & minor), ommissions, substitutions (meaningful & nonsense), hesitations, short eye-voice span, regressions

e. poor comprehension

f. slow reading pace

g. substandard reading level

h. mistaking words that look similar

i. using finger to keep pace

j. failure to recognize a word when it reappears although cued earlier

k. easy eye fatigue

1. participation better with materials presented in class (as opposed to read for class)

6. Oral spelling better than written spelling, or words often written phonetically

7. Visual-motor problems when printing, writing, copying, & drawing

   a. reverses letters, words, phrases

   b. seems sloppy and careless

   c. constantly refers to the visual model

   d. spaces poorly

   e. unorganized

8. Notices visual stimuli usually unnoticed by other students (marks on blackboard, etc.)

9. Seems more confused if visual material is crammed together (difficulty using a map, dictionary)

10. Responds better to verbal directions

11. Difficulty focusing and following print when going from far-to-near or near-to-far vision (looking from the blackboard to the textbook)

B. Suggestions to compensate

1. Allow student to verbalize whenever possible.

   a. before writing, let student state topic preference

   b. when studying, read material, lecture notes, & directions aloud

   c. with visual information, have the student summarize what is seen

2. Suggest that the student tape record lectures and directions for assignments.

3. Provide more auditory presentation of information.

4. Write legibly, use large type, do not clutter blackboard.

5. In visual presentations, preview and review the material and help students summarize it.

6. Have a consistent format for papers and assignments.

7. To compensate for verbal expressional dysfunctions:

   a. allow student to write answers before responding

   b. ask questions he can answer

   c. answer in written form evaluative appreciative questions (Barret's Taxonomy)

8. To compensate for reading problems:

   a. explain purpose of readings; critical analysis, overview, pleasure and appreciation, skim for main idea, scan for specific information

   b. ask sound comprehension questions; start with the literal, move to inferential, then evaluative, and end with appreciative level questions

   c. find materials paralleling the textbook but written at a lower reading level

   d. tell the student to use a ruler or blank white index card to hold reading place

   e. have the student read silently, then orally

   f. have the student read silently and follow along while listening to a tape recording of a good reader

9. Visual-motor problems

   a. encourage use of tape recorder for examination and lecture notes

   b. lower standards of acceptable writing

   c. encourage the student to use the typewriter when writing a paper or taking a test (should coordination allow for typing training)

d. tape lecture material and assignments for student use

e. for notes or test, encourage the student to use graph paper and write cursively (one letter per block) and to use pens and pencils that produce dark black lines

f. if student is expected to write in class, allot sufficient time or shorten assignment

10. Minimize visual stimuli; portable study carrels provide an effective environment.

11. Have the student keep a file of his most commonly misspelled words

12. Challenge far vision (blackboard) and near vision (ditto papers) simultaneously.

13. Reinforce all visual directions with verbal clues.

Overall, coordinate with the LD specialist so the student is not penalized for grammar, mechanics, spelling he hasn't mastered.

AUDITORY

A. Behavioral characteristics

1. Seems to hear but not to listen

   a. makes inappropriate responses

   b. hesitates before responding to oral questions

   c. ignores, confuses, and/or forgets verbal directions

   d. often seems to misunderstand

2. Has problems of articulation, enunciation, grammar, limited vocabulary, speech pace

3. Has trouble blending syllables or pronounces words as they physically appear

4. Has difficulty understanding and paying attention (daydreaming, hyperactive, blank expression on face) to oral activities and presentations

5. Seems perplexed when trying to understand people who speak quickly or quietly, as well as those who move while talking

6. Has problems with academic subjects taught orally

7. spells poorly

8. Easily distracted by noises inside and outside classroom (noises unnoticed by other students)

9. Frequently asks what just has been said (What?, Huh?)

10. Substitutes gestures for words

11. Watches the speaker's lips

12. Often looks at others before following directions

B. Suggestions to compensate

1. Use short one-concept statements

2. Encourage the student to tape each lecture

3. Talk at a slower rate

4. Face the student whenever possible

5. Do not penalize for incorrect spelling but correct the spelling

6. Encourage the student to select a seat that is clear of written graffiti, near a blackboard or overhead screen, and far removed from auditory disturbances

7. Tape classroom lectures

8. Encourage the student to visualize material that has been orally presented (revisualize material before answering question)

9. Whenever possible, keep visual clues

a. brief written outline of the material to be covered during that class session

b. examples on the chalkboard or overhead projector

10. Encourage the student to rewrite his lecture notes and write out sample test question answers while studying

11. Make written copies of lectures

12. Instruct the student to repeat your questions before answering

13. Reinforce oral directions with written ones or with other visual clues

YOU, THE TEACHER

Secondary teachers should share ideas and methods with each other so that other staff members can benefit from their experiences. At the same time, each individual teacher needs to teach as effectively as possible since much of what students learn is the result of how they are taught as well as what they are taught. Every high school teacher is a facilitator of learning and uses knowledge of the subject to make learning natural and enjoyable. The teacher is also a diagnostician of individual needs. Careful observation of each student's behavior, and assessment of needs to learn unique things about each student help a teacher include plans for involving each student in his own learning.

It should also be mentioned that the teacher is a creator of good learning environments. The teacher provides a wide variety of physical and human resources, and develops the skills for involving students in meaningful interactions with content and with people. With these descriptions of the secondary teacher's role in mind, let us encourage each other to reach the most students possible in the secondary phase of their school life.